1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

Peloponnesos.[1] Many villages are snowbound for two, three, or even four months. The government has learned the necessity of helping these people stockpile their basic stores of food well in advance of the cold weather to avoid starvation or at least the malnutrition which would otherwise occur in these isolated villages.

Even around Athens, so very near the sea, the mountains take on an Alpine effect. On a January day in 1953, when early jonquils were blooming in the gardens around the villas, a thirty-minute drive took us to the top of Mount Parnes where people were skiing in two feet of snow, which lasted from three to four weeks.

In addition to the climatic role they play, the mountains become places of refuge when invaders overrun the country. Here the revolutionaries against the Turk began to flex their muscles prior to the beginning of the revolution in 1821. The dwellers of the cities and the monks in the monasteries may have kept Greek culture, in the sense of civilization, alive, but the villagers kept the spirit of independence alive. Over and over again those who really know Greece would say, "you have not seen our country until you leave the main highways and go up into the mountains to talk with the hardy peasants there." This tradition of the mountains is a conditioning influence in Greek thought and life along with the tradition of the sea.

What, one wonders, do the peasants think of the rough terrain about them? Do they personify any of the peaks or make their summits the dwelling place of gods, as did the Greeks of old? The old Greek pantheon, it seems, has been liquidated by the Christian God and the collection of saints revered by the Eastern Orthodox Church. "Thou hast conquered, Galilean," Swinburne's classic pagan wept. One does find on most peaks a monastery to St. Elijah, a whitewashed building reflecting the slanting sun in early morning or late afternoon. Students of these matters seem to agree that Elijah (Elias), who disappeared in a chariot of flame, may have superseded Helios and his fiery steeds.[14] The top of the mountain from ancient times has been the place to worship the sun.

Particular mountains, however, do have their own local traditions. One of the peaks of Panaitolikon in Central Greece is called the Mountain of the Old Woman, as the following legend explains.

> Once upon a time an old woman had finished pasturing her sheep below for the winter and had moved them up into the mountains for summer grazing. The month of March was almost ended, so the woman said: "March, you can go away; I don't need you any more for I have had a good winter below and will have a good summer here." But March in its anger borrowed one day from February, giving him thirty-one days. On that day there was a heavy storm. The old woman froze and turned into marble and there she now stands. That's why they call those heights the Mountain of the Old Woman.

[1] [Throughout the Pindus area and the higher parts of the Peloponnesos - ANALYST]

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

than a two-year stint. But they do get higher pay than those in the army. They must apply for this service, are carefully investigated before they are accepted, and then are carefully trained. Some stay on after their three-year tour of duty is up and are given, at the end of twelve years, a lump sum as severance pay. With this, many of them open up some business of their own.

The field guards, also under the Ministry of Interior, are under a different administration but work closely with the gendarmerie, since many cases, such as theft from a field, involve both services. The gendarmes, because they are responsible for public security, also make their own investigations. In the village of Kyparissia (Peloponnesos) at the time of our visit, the people were temporarily without the services of field policemen, although they still received gendarme service from Tripolis. They were then working out an arrangement to pay a field policeman in products, although they would hold him responsible if he did not find the animals which had damaged crops. They expected him to work only during the day, for there was little danger at night. Far to the north in Epirus, near the Albanian border, we came across field policemen who also assumed security functions not only against animals but also against infiltrators from across the Iron Curtain.

The larger villages and towns serving as centers for governmental services enjoy many advantages that the smaller, more isolated villages do not have. In Dimitsana, in the Gortynia section of the Peloponnesos, the local people say that their economy is kept going only because of the state employees located there. It is the seat of a gymnasium (secondary school), a lower court, the gendarmerie command, a field-guard office, a tax office, and a postal and telegraph office. In Northern Greece the governmental facilities in Stavroupolis include:

1. The court house which serves the area of thirty villages.
2. A police station which also serves a neighboring commune.
3. Farm-security service (field policemen) which operates under the auspices of the government but is supported by a separate local tax on the area.
4. Tobacco board which operates on an area level and is responsible for the taxation and standardization of tobacco.
5. Extension service which serves the whole area. There is a home club which operates under a home agent who belongs to a different institution but is supervised by the extension service. The rural club located in the village operates under the supervision of the extension agent.
6. Forestry-conservation service which controls lumbering and protects the forest sections of the area from erosion.[12]

Perhaps the least appreciated service which the central government carries out for the commune is the collection of those taxes used in the support of church, school, police, and a number of advisory services. Many tax

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

795 which are found throughout the Balkans, speaks of the rich texture of
184 Christianity there, which came to the Balkan nations in the shape of Byzantine Orthodoxy and which meant a particular culture, comprising art, literature, and theology, in the service of the Church.[3]

One has only to review the brief description of the peasant and nature or the peasant approach to sickness and child care in earlier chapters to see how lively is the environment for any peasant who believes in the Evil Eye or the omens of spiders, birds in flight, or the hooting of an owl.[4] The peasant, instead of being made over into some sort of revolutionary Christian image, was able to take early Christianity and make it over into the even earlier Greek image. That is what survives in rural Greece today.

The educated Greek went through almost the same process, but on a much more sophisticated level. Instead of equating the sun god with St. Elijah, he equated Platonic teachings with the doctrines of St. Paul. Thanassis Aghnides sets forth this theme:

> As regards religious life, let us not forget that the New Testament was written in Greek, and most of the principles of Christianity are loans from Greek moral philosophy. Plato's ideas could find no better means of diffusion in the world than the New Testament.
>
> Thus a Greek never feels that the Christian religion is a Jewish gift to the world. When he reads the New Testament he is reminded of the highest precepts of the Greek classical period. Here again the modern Greek is not very conscious of the lines of demarcation between the high precepts of Christianity, and, let us say, those of Socrates. The latter's principles and those of the Galilean are derived from the same source. The modern Greek is confusedly aware of this. He may not say it in as many words but he feels the modern ethical standards of the Christian world as being part and parcel of his own heritage from his classical ancestors.[5]

In support of this point of view among the peasants, I can mention the consternation shown by some Greek village women when, for the first time, they learned that Christ was a Jew. They had always assumed that he was Greek and would not believe otherwise until they had gone to check with the priest.

795 Orthodoxy and Greekness are tied in together not only because of the
619 continuity between ancient traditions and Christian doctrine; the Orthodox Church was also the vehicle through which Greekness was preserved under
• 659 alien conquerors. Church and politics went hand in hand. The Greek Orthodox Church, which was the basic institution of the Byzantine Empire, continues as such within the modern Greek nation, and contemporary Greeks, like the Byzantines, find it hard to accept political ideas which do not assume the complete unification of church and state. Today the church is still an integral part of the Greek government, its affairs administered
[793] within the Ministry of Education and Religion, the salaries of the clergy

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

paid by the state as civil servants, and religious belief a part of national patriotism. Nothing really fundamental can be done in the nation down to the smallest commune without clerical interest and participation. This is not written law, but deep-seated custom.[6]

Greeks view contemporary events in terms of their own adaptation of New Testament teachings and claim that the Greek nation, though it has suffered many "Golgothas," has recovered from these disasters to experience a "resurrection" each time.[7] Such comparisons with the life and sufferings of Christ are also intelligible to the Greek peasant, who has little difficulty in identifying them with the sufferings of Greece through which the rest of the world will be saved. Greeks give episodes in Greek history, such as their defeat of the Italians in World War II and their fighting back the spread of Communism in postwar years, a political-religious interpretation highly charged with emotion because these touch upon what is sacred in the Greek national tradition — the unique contribution Greece has over and over again made to the preservation of Western civilization through the frequent ordeals she has endured.

The Village Priest and His Parish

An American walking down the street with a Greek friend is usually surprised when the Greek hits him on the shoulder and says, "I give you the priest." This act supposedly transfers to someone else the misfortune that might follow from meeting the *papas*, or priest, who passes dressed in his flowing black robes and his tall stovepipe brimless hat, and wearing a handsome black beard and his long hair neatly done up into a bun. Should he be accompanied by a woman, she is probably his wife, for in the Greek Orthodox Church there are both married and unmarried priests. The married priests can take the ordination vows after marriage, but no priest can marry after ordination. The married priests are usually the parish priests, and it is rare to find the village priest unmarried. On the other hand, the unmarried priest, recruited among the monks, can alone rise to high administrative positions in the church. He may, for instance, be a bishop over one of the sixty-seven dioceses or, if properly qualified, eventually be one of the twelve bishops comprising the Holy Synod which guides the church under the presidency of the Metropolitan of Athens, the actual head of the church. The Patriarch of Constantinople at Istanbul is the titular head, but this is more of a traditional and honorary office, since the Metropolitan is looked upon as the chief functionary. In Greece the king has no authority over the church.

In the village the parish priest, married as he is, settles down, digs his roots in deeply, so to speak. He knows that he has no opportunity for advancement in the church hierarchy; so there is no need for him to spend his time "politicking" for appointment to some choice position in the church

1:Sanders Z-5 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

793 courts. The village priest, therefore, acquires land and farms, in many
[423] cases just as diligently as the other villagers; he may even embark upon a
[441] few small-scale business enterprises on the side. His regular salary from
[571] the state gives him a steady income which the rest of the local people usually lack. This, combined with thrift and diligence, helps him acquire a little more property than the average farmer and enjoy a slightly higher standard of living. This is not guaranteed, of course, and one can call to mind many village priests who obviously were living on the barest minimum. At the same time, the priest is able to maintain what has been called [554] a "comradely equality" with his people.[8]

[794] The priest, however, is not necessarily a permanent fixture. The bishop appoints him to a post and the local congregation can refuse him, or it can raise objections to a bishop about a priest who conducts himself in ways the local people do not like. In most cases, the bishop tries to find the kind of priest that the local parishioners prefer. Since the priest often ac- [428] quires land, as has been pointed out, he wants to pass that on to his children. He may try to persuade one son at least to follow him in the service of the church. In one Peloponnesian village I found that a priest's son now off at the seminary was coming back to succeed his father, thus making a fourth generation of priests from the same family serving that parish. When I mentioned this to bishops and others familiar with church matters, they pointed out that this was a common phenomenon, and even gave the names of villages where a fifth-generation member from the same family was ministering to the same parish.

Should a parish vacancy occur, the bishop, who is informed about it as a matter of course, announces in the local papers as well as in the church papers that there is a vacancy in such and such a village and that all qualified people may apply. He goes through the applications, selects the eligible candidates, and posts their names on the door of the cathedral, with the notice that anyone who knows any reason why these people should not serve as priests should inform the bishop. After due time has elapsed, he makes the choice, giving heavy weight, according to one bishop who discussed this, to educational qualifications and moral considerations.

793 In pursuing in greater detail the relationship between the parish priest
465 and the state, I learned that it was under the leadership of Archbishop
[659] (Metropolitan) Damaskinos, who played such an important part in helping his country through the politically troubled waters from German occupation back to self-government, that the priests were put on a salary paid by the state. Before that, they had been paid from fees and also by products from the parishioners. *Kondota,* or the subscription by families of so much wheat, eggs, olive oil, and such, to the priest if he would serve them was [794] widely practiced before the present salary arrangement was made. In round figures, the parishes now contribute about one fourth of the amount

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

Whereas the effect of the coming of the Asia Minor refugees was to increase the population and heighten the economic activity of the country, the effect of the stay of these northern villagers in town was to loosen somewhat the social cement that holds the kinship group and the village community together. It set in motion more perceptibly in Northern Greece what has long been characteristic of Central Greece and the Peloponnesos: the urbanization of the countryside, in the sense of the spreading influence of urban ways.

War is not the only source of cataclysmic change. Devastating earthquakes sometimes destroy densely populated areas. In 1953, shortly after we left Greece, earthquakes created havoc on the islands of Cephalonia and Zante. My former interpreter, Bessie Adossides, described this in a revealing letter:

> As soon as these earthquakes started, Mother and I presented ourselves to the Greek Red Cross and volunteered to go either to Cephalonia or Zante. Thus on August 13th we left via Patras for Zante. Mother was heading a group of eighteen volunteer nurses and, when we arrived at our destination, the whole town was still in flames and the place smelled of burned flesh. The disaster in the town of Zante was complete; only one church, a school, and a bank were standing. The panic, suffering, and agony of the population were indescribable. We found on our arrival that nurses from Patras had set up a provisionary tent hospital, but as there was not sufficient place for all the wounded and sick, these were being shipped to Patras. For two nights we stayed awake as the fire came very near the hospital and we had to be ready to carry everybody on board a ship in the harbor. Luckily this did not happen.

Although this letter describes the efforts of a few individuals, the whole Greek nation was asked to contribute to the reconstruction of these destroyed island communities. International agencies also helped. Such a catastrophic experience, with its rupturing of some social bonds and the forging of new ones, has brought about social changes in the areas affected. The economic drain resulted in readjustment of the government's plans for economic development, since substantial material resources had to be routed to this area of dire need. A few years before, the city of Volos in Thessaly had been badly affected; earlier it had been Corinth.

No matter what type of cataclysm occurs, when governmental authorities have to step in and assist in reconstruction, there is always the tendency — as expressed by one nomarch — for people to take "distribution of clothing, food, and medical care for granted, hoping it will go on forever." The fact that they have suffered entitles them, so they think, to continued support even after reconstruction days are past.

Social Drift

Even in a country as subjected to catastrophe as Greece, individuals decide whether or not to try new ways which they have seen or about which

2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959)1963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

watch the plays, and together concentrate their attention for over an hour on exactly the same activity.

The Village Church

The affairs of the church in Vasilika are administered by the priest with the aid of a committee of four men. Committee members are selected for three-year terms by the bishop from a list sent by the priest. One of the members of the committee is the treasurer for the church. He makes the collections at services and generally supervises the church's funds. In Vasilika income for the church is derived from the Sunday collections, the sale of offerings of wheat and olive oil made on special feast days, the sale of candles, rent on church property such as the old school building and the community office (both of these buildings were put up by the church as an investment), and the sale of produce from some twenty church-owned *stremata*. The priest is now given a small salary by the national government, but one-quarter of the church's income must be returned to the national treasury as a partial contribution of the community to the priest's salary. The other expenses of the church include the salaries (eighty drachmas a month) paid to each of the chanters and to the sexton. In Vasilika, the latter office is held by a sixty-year-old woman who is often assisted in her duties by her grandchildren. The physical maintenance of the buildings is also a responsibility of the church committee, and in 1959 they arranged for an extensive renovation of the main church.

The description just given is that of the formal organization of church affairs. In Vasilika the priest himself has more than his share of influence on all decisions and, indeed, it was said that one of the committee members in 1956 never went to any meetings of the church committee (they are said to be held about four times a year). The priest is a native of Vasilika, in his sixties. He is a strong, vigorous, and imposing figure, somewhat taller than the average villager and with a personality, temper, and voice to match. As he chants the liturgy the priest's deep voice fills the church, so that the elegant cadences of the Greek Orthodox mass gain added beauty. Because the priest and his sons have arranged his patrimony well, the priest as a private landowner is one of the more prosperous men in the village and for that reason, as well as for his personal qualities, he commands considerable respect.

Under the leadership of the priest, church affairs can, on rare occasions, involve the entire male population of the village. At about one o'clock on a rainy Sunday afternoon in the fall of 1955, the church bell rang. The men and the boys of the village streamed down the hill into the *agbora*. There they stood in the heavy rain as the priest, in his flowing black robes, as usual, and holding the only umbrella in the gathering over himself, began an impassioned oration. Several men responded with equal eloquence and after about a half-hour of speeches, they disbanded. It seems that one of the shepherds, who had rented a church-owned small house, was refusing to pay the rent asked of him. He had

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

of valour, worthy of comparison with the greatest exploits of the heroes of antiquity, during that bitter winter when the Italian army was pushed steadily back towards the sea across the snowy heights of Albania. The war against the Communists partook of the nature of a conscious defence of a Christian civilisation against the "Accursed of God". Not least in the new movements, piety and patriotism are inseparably linked—even though I have never seen in a house of the Zoë Brotherhood paintings of the *Averoff* with her attendant ironclads steaming to the relief of the holy mountain, such as commonly adorn the guest-rooms of Greek monasteries.

This identity of Church and State has, it need hardly be said, certain weaknesses; the Church has not, for example, always enjoyed that measure of freedom in the election of her hierarchs that most people would consider desirable (there have been several deplorable examples of the intrusion of political considerations into episcopal appointments within the last generation). The decisions of the Holy Synod have to be ratified by the State, and a lay procurator sits with the bishops on the *hierarchia*. These, however, are but trifling disadvantages as compared with the opportunities afforded by the profound associations that bind the Church to every department of Greek life, and which give to the nation-wide revival of the last few years such boundless potentialities for good.

Though the Greek Church has held fast the traditions committed to her charge, the guardians of these traditions have been as men only dimly aware of the nature of the treasure entrusted to their keeping: conscious only of its infinite worth and of the duty of passing it on intact and undiminished to those who followed in their steps. Now, it seems, the guardians are beginning to realise something of the true character of the royal treasure that they have watched over so faithfully these many centuries. The younger Greek theologians, like their brethren of the diaspora, are rediscovering their proper tradition and are filled with wonder at its richness and splendour. The possibilities latent in this reawakening are infinite. As yet (so far as Greece is concerned), it has scarcely begun. There can, however, be little question that the growing self-awareness found to-day amongst Orthodox theologians, the first fruits of which have already been gathered in Paris, is of incalculable importance not for the Orthodox world alone, but for Christendom as a whole.

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
EH1 Greece EH1

793 [463] peasant farmer who cultivates his land like all his parishioners, and who exercises a ministry which is almost wholly liturgical in character. His ecclesiastical duties are limited in practice to administering the mysteries of baptism and the holy chrism; to marrying and burying, and offering week by week the unbloody sacrifice; to singing the divine office; to memorial services, blessings of homes and crops and sundry other objects, and to an occasional exorcism.

793 465 [874] [589] The parish priest *must* be married and at least thirty years of age, and the most that he can hope for in the way of preferment is a slight increase in his basic stipend if he is able to spend a year or two at one of the seminaries (*phrontisteria*) for parish clergy. This basic wage—which is supplemented by fees and offerings in kind, as well as by the fruit of the country parson's agricultural and other labours—is miserable enough. It was only in 1949 raised to 250,000 drachmas (the equivalent of less than six pounds sterling) a month: a pair of boots then cost about 70,000 drachmas and a pig perhaps 300,000. In such circumstances the support of a large family leaves little margin for luxuries, even when harvests are good and life runs smoothly and securely. Unsatisfactory as the economic position of the village *papas* remains, it is considerably better than it was fifty years ago. Until 1909 the parish priest was entirely dependent upon the fees of his parishioners and the labour of his own hands. The provision of a regular stipend—inadequate as this may seem—was only made possible by the creation of a General Ecclesiastical Fund deriving its income from confiscated monastic property and lands; and while the anti-monastic legislation of recent years has aroused considerable resentment among the monks themselves, there can be little doubt that the redistribution of wealth which it has involved has been of incalculable benefit to the Church as a whole.

659 792 [423]

793 [795] Even in the towns the scope of the activities of the married clergy is strictly limited. There are a few married priests in Athens engaged in work of a type generally reserved for the monastic clergy; one of them, who presides over the press and information office of the *Apostoliki Diakonia* (the Home Mission of the Church of Greece) and has a son and a daughter who are both students of the theological faculty of the university, bears the title of *protopresbyter*—though this is rare in Greece. There are certain indications that the number of educated married clergy may before very long increase considerably; this has already happened among the Russians of the diaspora and elsewhere in the Orthodox world. It is, of course, from the celibate clergy that the bishops

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5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
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have been allowed to rust these many years, and armed resistance, however effective it may have been a century ago against a lightly armed assailant, could have availed the monks but little in the face of an enemy equipped with modern artillery. The monasteries lay at the mercy of the *barbaroi*: an easy prey, holding out a tempting prospect of plunder.

Elsewhere in Greece the destruction and pillage of religious houses has been less universal than in the isolated dioceses of the north. The ascetic life still flourishes in many communities scattered amongst the islands and in the Peloponnese; one may still find convents where the unrelenting battle with the powers of darkness is waged with something of its ancient ardour and where the monk is still manifestly the guardian of the walls; but such houses, it must be confessed, are now few and far between.

It must not, however, be supposed that the present decline of Greek monasticism is wholly attributable to the effects of a decade of war. Long before the storm burst upon them in 1940 the Greek monasteries had, with few exceptions, been reduced to a sorry plight. At the beginning of the nineteenth century many convents were very wealthy. Since then the foundations of their economy have been undermined by the loss of their properties situated in Rumania, the Caucasus and elsewhere, and as the result of a series of confiscations by the Hellenic government dating from 1833 onwards. Although a portion of the wealth made available by these confiscations has gone to swell the General Ecclesiastical Fund, and so to benefit the work of the Church, this anti-monastic legislation continues to arouse acrimonious controversy not only among the monks but (for rather different reasons) among churchmen in general.

There are, nevertheless, few laymen who would oppose the diversion of monastic property to the furtherance of social and educational projects and the improvement of the condition of the parochial ministry. The contemplative life has few champions outside the *sketai* of the holy mountain. There are many who value the monasteries for their former contribution to the life of the nation, for their traditions of hospitality, and for their archaeological interest, but few indeed who now regard them as centres of spiritual power. The traditional monasticism has come to be looked upon—at any rate in the towns—as an out-of-date phenomenon, quite irrelevant to the needs of the present time.

This is true not least of many of the leaders of the new movements,

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
EH1 Greece EH1
Lofiscos

[Villages of the Plains]

than 400 stremmata of cultivated land. Presumably the owner had divided legal title among relatives or friends without surrendering real control of his land.)

The village is very small. In 1956 its population was only 130,[1] yet it occupies no less than 6,000 acres, excluding the absentee landowner's estate, which is counted as part of the lands of Lofiscos by official government reckoning. This amounts to more than 46 acres per capita; and even though more than half of the land remains rough pasture, subject to flooding for part of every year, such an abundance of land represents solid wealth by Greek peasant standards. And indeed, the village is wealthy. Farmers find little difficulty in accumulating gold sovereigns with which to dower their daughters, for wheat is always in demand and a government purchase scheme keeps the price stable and well above world market levels. In spite of the shabby appearance of their houses and the untidy appearance of their clothes, the families of Lofiscos are, by their own standards, very well off. Almost all of them probably have several hundred gold sovereigns hidden away, but this no stranger could ever expect to know.

The tribulations of the second world war, of the occupation and of the guerrilla war made almost no impression on Lofiscos. The young men served in the army, of course, and saw something of the outer world. But on their return they seemed to fit back smoothly into the familiar routine. As the guerrillas never

1. This and all subsequent figures for village populations are rough approximations. Village records do not include any sort of census figure. They are confined to registration of births, marriages and deaths, and the most important function they serve is to provide the basis for the annual call-up of military recruits. Moreover, a family often remains registered in a village long after it has moved away; in such instances births and deaths are likely to be omitted from the village books, and may or may not be recorded elsewhere. One must therefore depend upon informal estimates of village officials. This leaves a considerable margin for error, unless the officials consulted are unusually careful.